

Site No. 12

BRENTON POINT

Newport
Ocean Avenue



BRENTON POINT

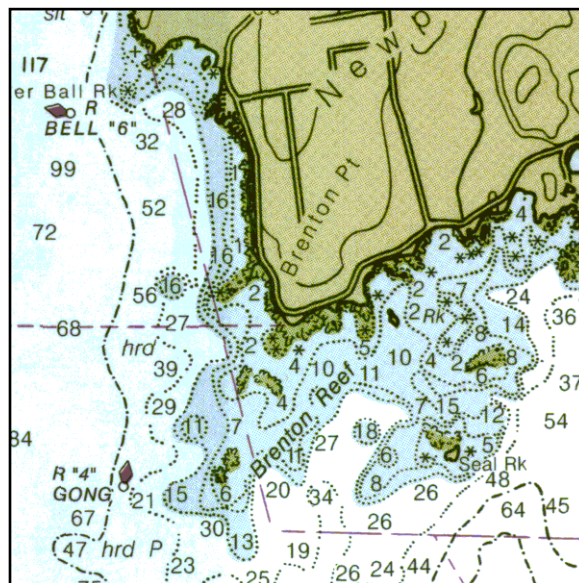
Site Description

Brenton Point State Park is located along southwesterly tip of Newport Neck at the East Passage entrance to Narragansett Bay. Running along the shoreline at this location, Ocean Avenue is elevated above the rocky beach by a concrete retaining wall which wraps around Brenton Point. Within the interior of the state-owned park, an access road runs parallel to Ocean Avenue and provides several small visitor parking areas along its length (see aerial photo). Fishing is conducted on the emergent rocks or in the surf at this location, primarily by experienced anglers capable of negotiating the difficult footing and open ocean currents which characterize the site. The park's open fields and consistent ocean breeze have also made it a renowned location for flying kites.

Location Assessment

Bay Location. Brenton Point is located at the entrance to the East Passage, also fronting the open ocean waters of Rhode Island Sound. Boating and sailing were observed to occur well removed from the shoreline due to the natural hazards to navigation present in this rocky bottom area (see nautical chart image). Brenton Reef is also known to be a popular area for scuba diving. King's Beach, a designated RIDEM fishing area, is located along Shore Road approximately ½ mile east of Brenton Point Park.

From the Online Recreational Fishing Survey, common catch in the vicinity of Brenton Point consists of Striped Bass and Bluefish, with Tautog and Scup also reported (all spring - fall). Waters in the vicinity of this site were assessed as fully meeting aquatic life support criteria. These waters are open to shellfishing and have been designated a water quality goal of SA (high quality) by the RIDEM (see Appendix B).



Land Location. Brenton Point is located at the southwesterly point of Newport Neck, which itself is the southernmost reach of Aquidneck Island. Recreational uses of the State Park include sightseeing along the shoreline, walking, picnicking, and kite-flying; park grounds are also used occasionally for small festival events. Surrounding the park, land uses are predominantly high-end residential. The Newport Country Club is situated directly east of the site, and Newport Neck is a popular area for bicycling. While well-known for its high scenic value, Brenton Point (and Newport Neck in general) is somewhat hindered by its poor accessibility: visitors must drive through downtown Newport (subject to high congestion on weekends, particularly during the summer months) and subsequently negotiate a series of narrow, winding local roads. The nearest RIPTA bus route (seasonal service to Fort Adams State Park) is approximately 2 miles from the site.

Environmental Constraints and Permitting. Brenton Point is a scenic, rocky shoreline along the Atlantic Ocean noted for its high surf and high winds. The coastal feature of the site is the

concrete retaining wall along Ocean Avenue, and waters in this area are designated by the CRMC as Type 1 (Conservation Area). No known areas of eelgrass are located in the vicinity of the site.

Facilities Assessment

Fishing at the Brenton Point site is conducted along the rocky shoreline, which can be accessed by stairs built into the Ocean Avenue retaining wall (see Photo 3). As evident by the several warning signs posted along the roadside, fishing along the rocks can be quite precarious due to the difficult footing, high surf, and quickly shifting tides typical of this location (Photos 2, 6, 7). A small stone breakwater extends from the westerly shoreline (Photos 1, 6), though this structure does not appear to offer significantly improved access or safety. While fishing was not observed at the time of site visit, anglers at other sites noted that Brenton Point is most often frequented for night fishing by more experienced anglers. An inherent limitation to this use however is the lack of viable after-hours parking at the site, as park facilities are closed from sunset to sunrise and there is no on-street parking along Ocean Avenue. Further east along the coast, the King's Beach Fishing Area offers similar natural shoreline fishing opportunities as well as 24-hour parking (Photo 8).

The interior of Brenton Point State Park is both well-maintained and landscaped, providing ample open space for active and passive recreation uses (Photos 4, 5). Park facilities include restrooms, picnic benches, and barbecue pits. Visitor parking is provided by several small roadside gravel strips along interior access road (Photo 4). These lots were less than half-full upon site visit, though it is likely that parking at the site approaches or reaches capacity during periods of heavier use (weekends, special events, etc.). While several handicap-designated spaces are provided, handicap usability of the site for fishing is not possible given the rocky terrain of the shoreline.

Existing Site Conditions

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
<i>Existing Fishing Facilities</i>			X	
<i>Parking</i>			X	
<i>Compatibility with Surrounding Land / Water Uses</i>			X	
<i>Statewide Transportation Accessibility / Public Transit</i>	X			
<i>Site Aesthetics</i>				X
	Low	Medium	High	
<i>Water Quality (see Appendix B)</i>			X	

Priority for Capital Improvements: **Low**

Though exhibiting several commendable qualities (including outstanding visual character and access to the quality waters along Rhode Island Sound), existing conditions at the Brenton Point

site are not conducive to the effective implementation of recreational fishing improvements at this shoreline location. Even if the development of recreational facilities were permissible in CRMC Type 1 waters in this area, the rocky shoreline and rough waters which characterize this site would make the engineering of any such structures either unfeasible or cost-prohibitive. The relative remoteness of the site within the Rhode Island transportation network also detracts from its viability, as the State's need for improved public shoreline fishing access would be more effectively served through capital investment at a more readily accessible location.

The above preclusions to shoreline development notwithstanding, Brenton Point does provide excellent natural shoreline and surf fishing opportunities for advanced anglers. To ensure that these opportunities remain viable for this important subgroup of the recreational fishing community, the State should continue to maintain and support fishing use of both Brenton Point and the King's Beach Fishing Area.



Photo 1. Westerly shoreline looking south to Brenton Point proper.



Photo 2. Brenton Point looking southeast.



Photo 3. Stairs for accessing the westerly shoreline from Ocean Avenue. Several such warning signs are posted along the length of this road.



Photo 4. Interior park road running parallel to Ocean Avenue. Parking is provided by several gravel strips along this road.



Photo 5. Interior park grounds. The park offers public restrooms, picnic benches, and barbecue pits.



Photo 6. Rocky shoreline and breakwater looking northwest from Brenton Point proper.



Photo 7. Southerly shoreline looking west to Brenton Point proper.



Photo 8. Parking lot for King's Beach Fishing Area (east of site).